

VZCZCXRO8297
OO RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHDIR RUEHKUK RUEHTRO
DE RUEHKB #0921/01 3291103
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
O 251103Z NOV 09
FM AMEMBASSY BAKU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2081
INFO RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH IMMEDIATE 0040
RUEHYN/AMEMBASSY SANAA IMMEDIATE 0013
RHMFISS/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL IMMEDIATE
RHMFISS/CDR USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE IMMEDIATE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEHDE/IRAN RPO DUBAI IMMEDIATE
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BAKU 000921

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/22/2029
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [INRA](#) [SA](#) [YM](#) [AJ](#) [IR](#)
SUBJECT: ALLEGED IRANIAN SNSC DEBATE ON SAUDI, USG ISSUES

REF: BAKU 909

BAKU 00000921 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: ACTING POL/ECON COUNSELOR SHANNON ROSS, FOR REASONS 1.4
(B) and (D)

Rising Saudi Tensions

11. (S) On November 23, Baku Iran watcher held a follow-up meeting with the Baku-based Iranian contact who provided the information related reftel. At the meeting source provided additional information concerning the alleged content of a November meeting of the Iranian Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), recent alleged bilateral incidents adding fuel to the fire, and other issues supposedly flowing out of a November 10 meeting of the Iranian Supreme National Security Council (SNSC). Source reported that approximately 80 Iranians on a pilgrimage to Mecca were detained in Saudi Arabia o/a November 20. The source said he did not know the reason for the detention, but speculated that these were indeed simply pilgrims, possibly with some kind of technical documentation problems. He claimed that, as of November 24, the Saudis have not deported, charged, or released the detained Iranian "pilgrims." He claimed that that Tehran is furious, but is attempting to resolve the issue quietly via negotiation. He cited a cousin working in the Haj Office in Tehran as his source for much of this information, but said it was confirmed by others.

Alleged Rock Throwing at Saudi Embassy

12. (S) As an example of concrete evidence backing his reftel reporting, source related that on the afternoon of November 22 a crowd of about 200 Iranians, demonstrated in front of the Saudi Embassy in Tehran and pelted it with stones. He said that this incident has also not yet been reported in the Iranian media, but may be later that day or the next. Note: A google check after this interview did not turn up any reports concerning this event; however an Embassy Baku FSN subsequently related that Iranian government-run Press TV ran a story on the Saudi Embassy incident on the night of November 23, including some footage of students denouncing alleged Saudi killing of Yemeni Sh'ia End Note.

Saudi UNGA Vote Angers Tehran

¶3. (C) Source added that on November 20 Saudi Arabia voted in favor of a UNGA Human Rights resolution critical of Iran. He noted that this was the first time it has done so (in previous years Saudi Arabia either abstained, or voted "absent" on such resolutions), and claimed (citing conversations with inside-the-beltway type Iranians) that the Saudi vote was received with "shock and anger" by some in Tehran.

More on Recent SNSC Deliberations

¶4. (S) Source reiterated reftel claim that stepped-up confrontation with Saudi Arabia was discussed at a meeting of the Supreme Security Council of Iran on November 10. He repeated that one option discussed at the meeting (attended by President Ahmedinejad, Speaker Larijani, and about fifteen others) was an Iranian "student seizure" of the Saudi Embassy, but claimed that this option was put on hold for now, due to strong opposition from some SNSC members, including Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani.

¶5. (S) He related that some in favor of the deploying the Embassy student occupation option argued that such an incident would help galvanize youth support for the regime. Apropos of this suggestion, source related that Ali Larijani observed sarcastically (either during or after the meeting, this was not clear) that "one experience occupying a foreign embassy is enough - in fact we have not yet extricated ourselves from the last (such) experience."

¶6. (S) Source again discussed the supposed "USG needs a war" policy memorandum and discussion referenced reftel, which allegedly called on preparation for American and/or Israeli

BAKU 00000921 002.2 OF 002

attacks and a stepped-up anti-America media campaign. He said that recently announced military training exercises to defend nuclear sites flows directly from this document, adding that less-publicized Persian gulf naval exercises are also pending and flow from the November 10 meeting, as does an instruction to prepare options for attacking sites in Israel. He said that the decision document was strongly backed by Alaeddin Boroujerdi, the Chairman of the Security Committee of the Milli Majlis. He described Boroujerdi as a former Marxist activist (known to him personally as such during their student days) who remains dogmatically anti-capitalist and anti-American, and who regards Western compromise overtures as "imperialistic tricks." Baku contact said that Boroujerdi attends all SNSC meetings, and is regarded by some (and portrays himself) as an expert on understanding the U.S. and its goals.

¶7. (S/NF) FYI. The Baku contact provided more detailed information on the alleged source of his information on recent SNSC deliberations, as well as certain operational facts about the Council. This sensitive information will be provided septel. End FYI.

CIS Watch Group in Foreign Ministry

¶8. (S) Source noted that the SNSC sometimes turns to a strategic unit headed by former Ambassador to Azerbaijan Ahad Gazayi for expert advice on Russia and CIS issues (although Gazayi does not attend SNSC meetings). He explained that Gazayi, whom he has known since student days, now heads a CIS coordination center or think tank within the Foreign Ministry, which has branches in several Iranian Embassies in CIS countries. He said that Gazayi travels frequently to CIS countries, and at least once a month to Baku, where the main branch office of his CIS analysis group is situated. He remarked that Gazayi comes from a respected family in Ardebil, and is personally courteous and rather liberal.

Information on Baku Source

¶9. (S) Baku Iran watcher has known this contact for over a year. He was very helpful in networking with Iranians in Iran after the election fiasco, including a figure connected to the Rafsanjani clique. He also assisted a local Baku NGO in organizing a successful tri-nation conference on Iranian women's issues held in Istanbul last November, recruiting many of the Iranian participants (some prominent). He was formerly a journalist and magazine editor in Tabriz, and was imprisoned for a year followed by judicial exile for his cultural nationalism (although he considers himself 100 percent Iranian, and is no separatist or autonomist). As a student he was Marxist anti-Shah organizer, though he says he no longer believes in Marxism. Some of his contacts in his disparate network result from these three experiences, e.g. a Rafsanjani circle contact who was a prominent figure in the National Religious (Melli Mazhabi) group was in prison with him.

Comment

¶10. (S) Baku contact identified the purported main source for the alleged SNSC deliberation information. Specific data on this and other sensitive details concerning supposed SNSC operational practices will be conveyed septel. What can be said in this cable is that the purported original source of most of the above information is credibly in a position to have access to the information provided. However, while our strong impression is that the Baku contact genuinely believes his information is accurate, Iran we cannot yet assess the credibility of the information itself, or that the purported original source of the information is indeed the real one.
End Comment.
DAVIDSON